

2489 **CHAPTER 5. ASSESSMENT IN THE ARTS**

2490 Throughout California the visual and performing arts content standards provide teachers,  
2491 administrators, students, and the community with a clear set of expectations for what  
2492 students should know and be able to do in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts in  
2493 elementary school, middle school, and high school.

2494 **The Role of Student Assessment in Visual and Performing Arts Programs**

2495 Assessment in the arts provides teachers with valuable information on what needs to be  
2496 adjusted in instruction to meet students' needs toward achieving the content standards. It  
2497 helps teachers build a profile of each student that can be used to communicate progress.  
2498 At the school district level, the assessment data provide the help administrators need to  
2499 make effective decisions about instruction, personnel, and resources for the arts education  
2500 program.

2501 Assessment and instruction are aligned within the curriculum. The key to using  
2502 assessment effectively and efficiently is to recognize that, above all, no single assessment  
2503 tool meets all assessment needs. Assessments are used to inform instruction, monitor  
2504 student progress, provide feedback to students and parents, summarize students' learning  
2505 over a given period of time, and provide additional information to qualify students for  
2506 special programs.

2507 Assessment of student work in the arts may be accomplished through thoughtfully  
2508 designed performance, critique, and analysis. Artists are constantly assessing their own  
2509 performances and products and asking others to assess or critique their work. If visual  
2510 and performing arts curriculum and instructional materials fully integrate assessment,  
2511 most assessment activities—especially the monitoring of progress—will contribute to  
2512 learning and maximize instructional time.

2513 The publication *Taking Full Measure: Rethinking Assessment Through the Arts* (Wolf  
2514 and others 1991) enumerates five assumptions about the efficacy of assessment in the  
2515 arts. First, both students and teachers insist on excellence as exhibited in performance and

in a portfolio. High standards are set, and studio and classroom discussions involve ways in which to reach those standards. Second, there is much talk on judgment—opinions on a range of qualitative issues—and decisions based on insight, reason, and craft. Third, self-assessment is important for all artists. Students need to learn how to understand and appraise their own work and that of their peers and other visual or performing artists. Fourth, varied forms of assessment need to be used to obtain information about both individual and group performances. Fifth, ongoing assessment allows students to reflect on their own creations and use the insight gained from the process to enrich their work. When viewed in this way, assessment is an episode of learning. (See Appendix 4 for additional assessment resources.)

### **Types of Assessment**

Regular assessment of student progress in mastering grade-level standards is essential to the success of the instructional program based on the visual and performing arts content standards and framework. Assessments of student work should be informative and timely and contribute appropriately to student learning and development.

The three types of assessments are characterized as follows:

- *Entry level.* Do students possess crucial prerequisite skills and knowledge? Do they already know some of the material that is being taught? This type of assessment identifies what students already know and helps teachers determine the most efficient starting point for learning. Some entry-level assessments should measure mastery of foundational standards; others should measure the degree to which students have mastered some portion of what is to be learned next. Teachers should use the information from the entry-level assessment to ensure that students are supported in specific areas while including them in grade-level instruction. An entry-level assessment might consist of a pretest of vocabulary, open-ended conceptual questions, performance opportunities for students to show current mastery of theory or technique, or opportunities to demonstrate current level of skill by means of a set of material or prompts.

- *Monitoring of Progress.* Are students progressing adequately toward achieving standards? Monitoring of their progress helps steer instruction in the right direction and should occur regularly. In standards-based classrooms, such monitoring becomes a crucial component of instruction for every student. It signals when alternative routes need to be taken or when students need to review material before moving forward. It is only through such monitoring that teachers can continually focus instruction so that all students are constantly progressing. In a sense, everything students do during instruction is an opportunity for monitoring. Ongoing assessment allows student artists to reflect on their own creations and use the insights gained from the process to enrich their own work. Students need to learn how to appraise their own work as well as that of their peers and professional artists. Monitoring should therefore reflect the essential nature of the skill or knowledge being assessed, directing student learning and establishing expectations for achievement. It may be internal or external. Internal monitoring is a process for students to determine their level of mastery according to a set of clear criteria. External monitoring provides opportunities for teachers to determine the students' level of mastery according to a set of clear criteria. External monitoring should:
  1. Document performance.
  2. Help teachers make instructional decisions and adjustments based on the documented performance.
  3. Identify student performance in relationship to the standards.
  4. Include a variety of strategies to determine students' level of knowledge and skills.

Monitoring of progress in the arts is formal or informal. Formal monitoring might be in the form of questions or prompts that students answer or performance of a prescribed set of skills on demand. Informal monitoring might include a conference or conversational analysis centered on a work in progress and determination of the next steps needed for completion.

- *Summative evaluation.* Have students achieved the goals defined by a given standard or group of standards? Summative evaluation is used to determine whether students have achieved the goals defined in a standard or group of standards. It answers the following questions: Do students know and understand the material? Can students apply the material in another situation? Are students ready to move on? Typically, this type of assessment comes at the end of an instructional unit or school year. The most important aspect of summative evaluation is that it measures the students' long-term growth and mastery of grade-level standards.

## **Considerations in Arts Assessment**

The visual and performing arts content standards focus on developing the knowledge and skills required to create artwork and performances. They also include the study of the arts and artists and their influence on culture. Comprehensive assessment relies on a variety of tools to create a complete evaluation of the students' progress. Student work, performances, open-ended projects or questions, research assignments, constructed response items, and multiple-choice items (multiple choice) are all appropriate for use in the arts curriculum.

### *Scoring Guide*

For any performance assessment tool used, explicit criteria for the evaluation of the students' work should be identified and shared with the students prior to the evaluation process. Because the arts encourage enthusiasm or willingness to try new things, there are a number of ways in which students can solve artistic problems. Therefore, the result of an assignment or performance task may be very different from what was envisioned yet meet the stated criteria for assessment. When students and parents or guardians are familiar with the criteria and rubrics or scoring guides that teachers use to identify the students' levels of success in meeting the content standards, the students can fully express their creativity according to the accepted criteria. Sample scoring guides describing levels of performance can accompany assignments or performance tasks to help students maintain a focus on their work.

*Assessment of Performances and Exhibitions*

Student performances and exhibitions can lend themselves to informal or formal assessment. Careful planning allows beginning performances to be shared and critiqued to help students gain mastery of the skills being developed. Supportive and creative environments allow students to build their confidence. Students gain experience through informal presentations or at school board or parent meetings. The entrance requirements of the University of California and California State University call for performance course criteria to include appropriate cocurricular work, such as performances and exhibitions.

*Student Portfolios*

One way to assess student learning is to examine a collection of work. Professional and student artists maintain portfolios of formal and informal work to monitor their progress and show the depth and breadth of their skills over time. The portfolio helps students see their improvement and helps teachers evaluate student progress as well as the effectiveness of their teaching strategies. When portfolios are reviewed according to predetermined criteria, teachers and students can identify the students' levels of content mastery. Portfolios can also be used to demonstrate to parents students' strengths and challenges in the content mastery being discussed. Assessment portfolios might include draft sketches, technique development, finished work, or documentation of artwork or performances in forms such as photographs, audiotapes, videotapes, digitally formatted compilations, and reflective writings. Portfolios that may be presented as collections of original work or recorded on a videotape, CD, or DVD are as follows:

- *Process portfolio.* This portfolio demonstrates student mastery over time. The work includes rough sketches or drafts, preliminary plans for staging, scores or scripts, choreography notes and diagrams, and more refined and finished works. It may also include written reflections on the works in progress, the process for completing the work, influences on the work, and critiques of self and peers. The teacher and the student discuss the work periodically during the course to determine progress and areas of need.

- 2631 • *Portfolio of assessment tasks.* This portfolio includes a series of specific tasks  
2632 or assignments usually related to mastery of a set of specific content standards  
2633 in each of the strands. The California Art Education Association has  
2634 developed a middle school portfolio of the assessment tasks. In task 1 the  
2635 student compares and contrasts two works of art that are portraits; in task 2 the  
2636 student creates a self-portrait; and in task 3 the student evaluates his or her  
2637 own artwork, using a scoring guide.
- 2638 • *Best-work portfolio.* This portfolio is intended to showcase the best work the  
2639 student has completed in a course. Usually selected jointly by the student and  
2640 teacher, this portfolio is typically used in formal and informal reviews of  
2641 student progress.
- 2642 • *Competition or high-stakes portfolio.* Portfolios of this type are developed by  
2643 students for competitions, applications for advanced study, or admission to  
2644 special programs. Works included in this portfolio are of the highest quality  
2645 and demonstrate advanced technical skills and conceptual awareness. They  
2646 usually show evidence of accomplishment in a variety of media and include a  
2647 reflective statement written by the student regarding the work.

## 2648 **TEXT BOX**

### 2649 *Ensemble Assessment*

2650 Ensemble products provide a different set of challenges and opportunities. The members  
2651 of the orchestra, the dancers within the troupe, the ensemble actors in the play, and the  
2652 singers in the quartet all need their own clear assessment criteria. The individual student's  
2653 role within the group is vital to the overall success of the ensemble, whether it be the role  
2654 of the soloist or the chorus. That factor should also be a part of the overall assessment of  
2655 a student's progress in the arts.

### 2656 *New Media and Electronic Technology in Arts Assessment*

2657 Using new media and electronic technologies for assessment is of increasing value to  
2658 visual and performing arts educators and students. As a method of delivering constructed

response items, a school or district may select exemplary student or teacher work to be digitally photographed and/or recorded. Virtual reality software facilitates a 360-degree view of an object or a performance with a simple move of the computer mouse. Once the information is burned onto a CD, it may be used by the entire school or district as part of an assessment.

Portfolios of student work in any arts discipline can be burned onto a CD or DVD and stored and shared with others for assessment. Students may send portfolios to colleges or universities for entrance into a program or may use them in applying for employment. In creating portfolios students develop skills in critiquing their own work, a sense of accomplishment, marketable technology skills, an insight into their body or work, and a portable record of their work. Student performance artists will especially find videotapes invaluable in documenting their work and in critiquing it.

An electronic process for assessing student work and providing professional development for arts teachers involves a Web site with an interactive digital interface. Teachers upload a standards-based assessment task with an accompanying scoring guide. Examples of student work are then added so that other teachers can evaluate to what extent the work meets the criteria on the scoring guide. Teachers from different schools and school districts may have access to the site to provide their observations and comments. Insights are gained by having multiple reviews of the work, and anchor or benchmark performances can be established for the task.

#### **SIDEBAR TEXT BOX**

##### **Multiple Measures of Student Progress in the Arts**

Selected response items: multiple choice, true-false, matching, enhanced choice

Brief constructed responses: fill in the blank (words, phrases), short answer (sentences, paragraphs), label a diagram, visual representation (Web, concept map, flowchart, graph/table, illustration)

2685 Products: essay, research paper, log/journal, report, story/play, exhibit, project, artwork,  
2686 model, a dance, video/audiotape, portfolio

2687 Performances: oral presentation, dance, sing or play an instrument, demonstration,  
2688 dramatic reading, enactment, debate, recital, teach a lesson

2689 Process-focused: oral questioning, observation, interview, conference, process  
2690 description or demonstration, think aloud, learning log

2691 This list is adapted from Ferrara and McTighe, *Assessing Learning in the Classroom*  
2692 (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1994).

2693 *Assessment Beyond the Classroom*

2694 Students can reach beyond the classroom to test their knowledge and skills. Sharing  
2695 works in progress and completed artwork or performances beyond the classroom is an  
2696 invaluable source of new input and ideas. Schoolwide student exhibitions and  
2697 performances provide a supportive first step in sharing artwork with the greater  
2698 community. In time the scope of this sharing can widen to include district, city, county,  
2699 state, and national festivals and competitions. Participation in these events is not an end  
2700 in and of itself but rather an integral part of a larger learning objective.

2701 Participation in festivals, competitions, and public exhibitions provides opportunities for  
2702 individual and ensemble assessment. Experienced adjudicators provide constructive  
2703 feedback to teachers and their students and valuable insight that reinforces and extends  
2704 classroom learning. Participation should be viewed as an educational experience.

2705 Teachers must balance opportunities to share student work and students' need for  
2706 practicing their skills without the pressure to provide entertainment at events, assemblies,  
2707 meetings, clubs, and conferences. Although the visibility and popularity of student  
2708 performing groups can build widespread support for the arts program, those activities  
2709 should not interfere with the students' overall education.



Advanced placement (AP) courses provide opportunities for students to challenge the depth of their understanding of conceptual and historical arts on a national scale. Rankings from AP examinations can benefit a student's college placement and chances of winning scholarships and grant entitlements. International Baccalaureate schools offer students a standardized program focused on critical thinking and exposure to a variety of points of view and designed to encourage intercultural understanding by young people. More information may be found online <<http://www.ibo.org>>.

#### *Arts Assessment in California*

The California arts education community has been exploring the assessment of student work in the arts for many years. The Towards Arts Assessment Project of the California Department of Education and the Sacramento County Office of Education published *Prelude to Performance Assessment in the Arts: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (California Department of Education 1994). Assessment projects have been initiated by The California Arts Project (TCAP) to involve more teachers in multiple measures of arts assessment. The California professional arts teacher associations provide resources on arts assessment. The California Art Education Association (CAEA) published two documents on portfolio assessment in the visual arts. The California Music Educators Association (CMEA) offers publications on assessing students in music as well as regional and statewide-adjudicated festivals and competitions. The California Dance Educators Association (CDEA) and the California Educational Theatre Association (CETA) also provide information in their publications and professional development in assessing student work at their annual conferences. In addition, CETA and CAEA offer students the opportunities to participate in adjudicated festivals, competitions, and shows. The California professional art teacher associations are affiliated with their national counterparts, who also provide publications on arts assessment (see Appendix 6).

In 1998 the California Department of Education initiated the California Arts Assessment Network (CAAN) to assist school districts in developing and piloting appropriate assessment of student work in the arts at the school district level. The network activities include, for example, a project with TeachingArts.org, the California online arts resource center, to evaluate student work interactively online. CAAN is also collaborating with

educational agencies in other states to develop an online pool of assessment items through TeachingArts.org and the Council of Chief School Officers, State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, Arts Education Assessment Consortium.

*Arts Assessment on a National Scale*

In 1997 the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) developed assessment tools and items for grades four, eight, and twelve in dance, music, theatre arts, and visual arts. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) was given to eighth-grade students throughout the nation. The assessment measured students' knowledge and skills only in music, theatre, and the visual arts. Although an assessment was developed for dance, it was not administered because of the lack of a suitable national sample. The next arts assessment will be administered in 2008. Further information is available online <<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/arts/>> or from the NAGB at 800 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 825, Washington, DC 20002-4233.

*Arts Assessment from the Classroom to the School District*

Assessment data help schools and school districts to be accountable for the quality of standards-based arts education programs. A school district moving toward establishing districtwide assessment in the arts might first do an arts program assessment to determine the extent to which the arts are taught at each school level. Then the district would consider what students need to know in order to attain the visual and performing arts standards and how to report their progress. As school districts move toward student assessment in the arts and share their processes and results, arts education programs throughout the state will be expanded and improved.